“I alone cannot change the world, but I can cast a stone across the waters to create many ripples.” – Mother Theresa

After all the divisiveness of the few years, too many of us are feeling hurt, angry and stuck in our bubbles. We need to start healing, reconnecting with people outside of our own social, religious and cultural circles.

It feels like people are more divided today than ever. Public discourse has become ever more divisive, and too many of us have become isolated within small groups of people who are most like us.

One day a thought came to me: “Let’s start with a cup of coffee or tea and become friends!”

Coffee Chat Collective began when I reached out to a couple of friends of mine who also wanted to find a way to foster friendships, peace, understanding and solidarity. I put together a simple Facebook event and we shared it out, inviting anyone, regardless of culture, religion, race or political orientation, who was interested to join us for coffee and conversation. Since our first meeting of three in a Midland coffee house, our gatherings have grown each time we’ve met, and Coffee Chats have spread to other towns in Michigan and to other states.

*“At first we drew 3 than 5, than 9 and then 18 and as more and more people find out about these gatherings we are doubling and tripling each time -- and this is happening just by letting friends of friends know by word of mouth and posting a public Facebook event. I’ve been hearing from people nationwide and worldwide messaging me and asking if they can copy this idea and do this in their area. I hope it becomes a global movement! How heartwarming would it be if we were all to meet and spread this feeling of friendship across the seven seas and oceans and be with each other in spirit?” – Shona Siddiqui, organizer of Coffee Chat Collective in Midland, Michigan.*

We’d like to invite you to join us by starting your own Coffee Chat. To make it as easy as possible to start bringing people together, I’ve made our event page, template, description and logo available to everyone. Just plug in your location and get going!

Remember that all it takes is for one of us to make a ripple that can spread across an ocean!

“If we have no PEACE, it is because we have forgotten that we belong to each other. Every time you SMILE at someone, it is an action of LOVE, a GIFT to that person, a BEAUTIFUL thing.” (Mother Theresa)

<https://www.facebook.com/Coffee-Chat-Collective-588120098043895/>

Here’s an article in our local paper that covered our first Coffee Chat in Midland, Michigan.

<http://www.mlive.com/news/saginaw/index.ssf/2017/02/post_167.html>

**SHORT DESCRIPTION:**

For a long time I’ve been involved with all kinds of interfaith events. A lot of what those events are about is sharing information, helping us understand each other’s religions intellectually. With that knowledge comes understanding and tolerance.

But what I’ve always loved most about them are the lasting friendships that form between people who gather again and again with the sole purpose of building bridges, of understanding each other better. The people I’ve met through interfaith have become some of my dearest friends.

A little more than a month ago, I reached out to a couple of my friends and decided to start getting together for coffee with people of different faiths, cultures and backgrounds. Coffee Chat is all about building those friendships. I put together a Facebook event page and we shared it with our contacts. There were 3 of us at our first gathering, then 9 and then 18. Our gatherings have been more than doubling each time just by letting friends of friends know by word of mouth and continuing to share our Facebook event.

Since we started, so many people from around the country have been messaging me to ask if they can copy the idea and do this in their area.

So we’d like to invite you to join us by starting your own Coffee Chat. To make it as easy as possible to start bringing people together, I’ve made our event page, template, description and logo available to everyone. Just plug in your location and get going!

I hope it becomes a global movement! How heartwarming would it be if we were all to meet and spread this feeling of friendship across the seven seas and oceans and be with each other in spirit?

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**MEDIA Newspapers:**

<http://usa-eventer.com/event/coffee-chat-bay-city-mi-an-opportunity-to-meet-people-from-diverse-backgrounds-share-our-unique-heritage-and-make-friends>

<http://www.usampm.com/event/Coffee-Chat-BAY-CITY-MI-An-opportunity-to-meet-people-from-diverse-backgrounds-share-our-unique/1950594/>

**MEDIA Facebook:**

MIDLAND: <https://www.facebook.com/events/572498459627135/>

BAY CITY: <https://www.facebook.com/events/146703315844387/>

SAGINAW: <https://www.facebook.com/events/592016750993471/>

**COFFEE CHAT COLLECTIVE:**

<https://www.facebook.com/coffeechatcollective/>

**TESTIMONIALS:**

“A great way for us all to come together, meet people of different backgrounds and erase fears.”

* Kathy Miller

“I had never met a Muslim before and only heard about their faith through the media. Coming to the Coffee Chat and meeting not just one, but many Muslims took away so many misunderstandings I had before meeting people of the Islamic faith.”

* Debra Schaefer

“What a wonderful way for us to gather regularly and break down barriers and meet each other on common ground. I had so many misconceptions and I now understand my Muslim and Bahai neighbors better. And the best part is that we don’t’ have to agree, we just need to realize that we’re all human and that is what unites us.”

* Nancy Lewis

**REFERENCES:**

Heather Khalifa, Email: Hkhalifa@mlive.com

EllaMarie Shroeder, Email: ellamarie2@gmail.com

Margaret Clark, maclark2@hotmail.com

Barbara McGregor, jamochacha@gmail.com

Hayley Lodhi, haylo444@gmail.com